



## Transportation Fact Sheet

# Alternative Transportation Systems Partnerships

Access to and within the National Park System has been a defining experience for generations of visitors.

The National Park Service (NPS) coordinates the planning and implementation of transportation systems that improve the visitor experience and care for national parks by:

- Preserving natural and cultural resources.
- Enhancing visitor safety and security.
- Protecting plant and animal species.
- Reducing congestion.
- Decreasing pollution.

NPS is committed to being a leader in pursuing strategies that can help make park units more enjoyable, cleaner, quieter, and more sustainable for present and future generations.

For more information, visit [nps.gov/transportation/alt/](https://nps.gov/transportation/alt/)

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**EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA**

*The National Park Service and public and private partners are working together to address transportation impacts – congestion, air pollution, and noise pollution – within the parks and in nearby communities.*



Partnership efforts by the Ford Motor Company through the National Park Foundation enabled restoration of Glacier National Park's famous red buses — first introduced in the 1930s, they have been modernized with clean-burning propane engines to serve a new generation of visitors.

Many NPS units are working with a variety of partners to develop Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) as a means to address shared problems. At nearly 100 national park units, shuttle buses, trams, ferries, and other types of alternative transportation are reducing traffic congestion while improving the visitor experience and the quality of life in surrounding communities. ATS can help meet the needs of visitors, park resources, and surrounding communities.

22 of these systems include public and private transportation partners. These partnerships provide important connections between parks and their adjacent communities through coordinated alternative transportation systems.

Partnering benefits NPS units in many ways. For example, partnering can help provide an NPS unit with the staff, technical expertise, and diverse and stable financial support structure it needs to address transportation challenges. Partners can include Metropolitan Planning Organizations; transit agencies; planning commissions; State and Federal transportation, environmental, and other agencies; local, county, and state elected officials and governments; environmental, recreation, and historical preservation organizations; area businesses and developers; local citizens and landowners; and participants in the Proud Partners program created by the National Park Foundation. As part of this program, the Ford Foundation and others have funded Transportation Scholars, a project which puts transportation professionals in the parks to provide in-depth expertise on transportation issues.

## Alternative Transportation Program

### Acadia National Park in Maine

Strong cooperation led to the successful development of the Acadia National Park Island Explorer shuttle bus system in the summer of 1999. To develop the system of propane-fueled buses, Acadia worked with Bar Harbor and other local towns, the Mount Desert Island League of Towns, the Friends of Acadia, Downeast Transportation, Inc., local businesses, and state and federal transportation agencies. Acadia National Park, area businesses, and local municipalities contribute funding so that visitors can ride free of charge during the Memorial Day to Labor Day season. To enhance the Island Explorer system, L.L. Bean gave the Friends of Acadia a \$1 million grant in 2002.



### Zion National Park in Utah

In 2002, Zion National Park restricted vehicle use on Zion Canyon Scenic Drive from April through October. Instead of allowing unrestricted access, visitors and local residents now use a fleet of 30 propane-powered shuttle buses to visit attractions in Zion Canyon and the local town of Springdale. Zion National Park worked closely with the community of Springdale, local businesses, Zion Natural History Association, Springdale Visitors Bureau, Utah Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, and park concessionaires to develop its ATS. To help keep communities informed and to represent park interests in transportation planning, park representatives attend monthly meetings of the Springdale Visitors Bureau. In addition, the park supports an “Ambassadors’ Training” program that allows trained businesses to put a shield in their windows stating that they can answer questions about the park and provide park information.

### Mount Rainier National Park in Washington

Mount Rainier National Park has implemented alternative transportation solutions that rely on strong relationships with many different partners — concessionaires, transportation providers, local residents and business owners, local governments and tribal councils, non-profit organizations, the Washington

Department of Transportation, the Washington Tourism Department, and the U.S. Forest Service. Design charrettes and technical planning sessions reached out to local communities to consider different transportation options, the Forest Service’s regional office identified additional partners, and all partners were informed as to available funding options. Three operators now provide transportation services between the park and nearby towns.



**Mount Rainier National Park has a long history of alternative-transportation partnerships, as shown in this picture from the early 1900s.**

